



**PIERLUISI DEMANDS CLEANUP OF
FORMER MILITARY LANDS ON CULEBRA**
**Introduces legislation that would authorize the U.S. Corps of
Engineers to Clean the Northwest Peninsula and Flamenco Beach**
Thursday, April 2, 2009

WASHINGTON, DC- The Resident Commissioner in Washington, Pedro Pierluisi, today introduced a bill to repeal a 1974 federal law that, according to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, bars the federally-funded cleanup of certain areas on Culebra Island where military exercises were conducted for many years.

These areas—the Northwest Peninsula and Flamenco Beach—are likely to contain the most unexploded ordnance of any area on Culebra. 34 years ago—in response to the demands of the people—Congress required the Navy to cease operations on the island.

The Resident Commissioner's bill was introduced with the sponsorship of the three members of Congress of Puerto Rican origin, José Serrano, Nydia Velázquez and Luis Gutiérrez.

"Cleaning up these areas remains critically important, more than three decades after the Navy left Culebra. Concerns about the health, safety and environmental hazards caused by unexploded ordnance persist. I want to thank my colleagues José Serrano, Nydia Velázquez and Luis Gutiérrez for joining me in this important cause," the Resident Commissioner said.

The Corps of Engineers has specifically argued that Section 204(c) of the Military Construction Authorization Act of 1974 prevents the cleaning of these areas.

"These areas of Culebra are the only two formerly-used defense sites in the nation that the Corps of Engineers claims it is barred by federal statute from cleaning, notwithstanding a 1986 federal law that assigned clean-up responsibility for these former military sites to the Department of Defense.

There is no sound rationale or principled basis for treating the Northwest Peninsula and Flamenco Beach differently than all other former military sites,” said Pierluisi.

In the case of Vieques, where the Navy had to abandon its military exercises due to the overwhelming demand of the people, the federal government has spent \$78 million on cleanup to date. The Navy estimates that another \$254 million will be needed to complete the cleanup. In the case of Culebra, by contrast, only \$11 million has been spent thus far on cleanup.

<http://pierluisi.house.gov>